Today’s piece was prepared by Rebecca Spurr, MD, based on a New York Times article [Exercise During Pregnancy May Have Lasting Benefits for Babies](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/07/well/move/exercise-during-pregnancy-may-have-lasting-benefits-for-babies.html?searchResultPosition=8)

This article reports the findings of a study by Linda May at East Carolina University. She took a sample of 71 expectant mothers in their first trimester and randomized them to an exercise or control group. The exercise group participated in supervised 50-minute aerobic exercise sessions three times a week throughout the rest of pregnancy. When each infant was a month old, their motor skills were evaluated using the Peabody Developmental Motor Scales 2nd Edition (PDMS-2), and babies whose mothers participated in the exercise group were found to have more advanced motor skills. She then suggests that these children may go on to be more active over the subsequent months and years.

The article did a good job of summarizing accurately what the researchers did1. That said, the article inflates the generalizability of these findings. The study was very small (only 71 mothers), did not control for social factors, and did not follow the infants beyond one month of age. According to a systematic review of several gross motor assessment tools2, the Peabody Developmental Motor Scales-2 has not demonstrated long-term predictive validity and therefore the author’s claim that infants from mothers who exercise will be more active throughout childhood because they’ll have consistently better motor skills seems like a stretch.

**RESOURCES FOR PARENTS ON MOTOR DEVELOPMENT:**

[Smart Toys for Every Age](https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/smart-toys.html?ref=search) *From KidsHealth (Nemours), provides guidance on toys that entertain and help kids understand the world, learn social and emotional skills, and stimulate a developing brain.*

[Exercise During Pregnancy](https://www.acog.org/Patients/FAQs/Exercise-During-Pregnancy?IsMobileSet=false) *FAQ’s from the American College of Obstetricians & Gynecologists*

**REFERENCE CITATIONS:**

1. McMillan, A, May, L, Gaines, G, Isler, C, Kuehn, D. Effects of Aerobic Exercise during Pregnancy on 1-Month Infant Neuromotor Skills. Med Sci Sports Exercise. 2019; Aug;51(8):1671-1676.
2. Griffiths, A, Toovey, R, Morgan, P, Spittle, A. Psychometric properties of gross motor assessment tools for children: a systematic review.  BMJ Open. 2018. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6224743/>

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!